

**Amendments to the Claims**

1-11. (Cancelled)

12. (Original) A method of increasing telomerase activity in a cell or tissue, comprising contacting said cell or tissue with a composition comprising an extract of an *Astragalus* or *Cimicifuga* species,

wherein the extract has telomerase inducing activity, such that, when said extract is formulated in a solvent at a concentration of 25 µg/ml or less, it is able to produce a level of telomerase activity in a keratinocyte or fibroblast cell, as measured in a Telomere Repeat Amplification Protocol assay, which is at least 25% greater than that measured for said solvent alone.

13. (Original) The method of claim 12, wherein the species is an *Astragalus* species.

14. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein the species is selected from the group consisting of *A. membranaceus*, *A. trojanus*, *A. zahlbruckneri*, *A. brachypterus*, *A. microcephalus*, *A. peregrinus*, *A. caprinus*, *A. melanophrurius*, *A. oleifolius*, *A. trigonus*, *A. spinosus*, and *A. verrucosus*.

15. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the species is *Astragalus membranaceus*.

16. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 12, wherein the species is a *Cimicifuga* species selected from the group consisting of *C. racemosa*, *C. dahurica*, *C. foetida*, and *C. acerina*.

17. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein the extract is from the root of the plant.

18. (Original) The method of claim 12, further comprising the step of, prior to said contacting, identifying a cell or tissue in which an increase in telomerase activity is desired.

19-24. (Cancelled)

25. (Original) The method of claim 12, wherein the concentration of said extract in said composition is from 0.1 to 50% (w/v).

26. (Original) The method of claim 25, wherein said concentration is from 0.25 to 25% (w/v).

27-54. (Cancelled)

55. (Previously presented) The method of claim 15, wherein the extract is obtained by extracting *Astragalus membranaceus* root with a polar solvent selected from the group consisting of water, lower alcohols, and combinations thereof.

56. (Previously presented) The method of claim 55, wherein the extract is obtained by a process that comprises:

- (a) heating a mixture containing *Astragalus membranaceus* root in a solvent containing at least 75% ethanol and the remainder water;
- (b) filtering the solid from the resulting mixture;
- (c) repeating steps (a)-(b) with the solid of step (b) and fresh solvent; and
- (d) combining the filtrates from steps (b).